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ABSTRACT

This booklet, developed by the Southampton (England) Adult Education Panel, provides a demonstration of how the barriers to education and training that confront disadvantaged adults can be overcome. It identifies 16 barriers to access as follows: money; value dominance in race, gender, or social class; child care; physical disability; bureaucracy; timing; information; language in publicity; language in learning; previous education; location; ownership of resources; previous experience; lack of confidence; inappropriate structure of courses; and irrelevant content. Case studies of programs where each of these barriers are overcome are provided. Each case study gives the background, identifies the main barrier, lists other associated barriers, describes how the barriers were tackled, and describes the outcomes of the project. Key points are summarized and an information contact provided. A framework for looking at access opportunities identifies a provider model and a user model. Four stages for influence and action in developing strategies to improve access opportunities to education are identified as follows: individual action involving a change of individual attitudes to learners; institutional action involving institutional reorientation without extra resources; institutional action requiring extra resources; and wider policy and curricular action involving fundamental changes in institutional attitudes, policy, and resources. (CML)

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## Breaking Down the Barriers

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## Breaking Down the Barriers

Edited and produced by:

**Peter Cowperthwaite, Rennie Johnston, Meg Ryves**
*The Southampton Adult Education Panel*

**with**
**REPLAN in the South/South West Region**

## Preface

The work of REPLAN has identified a number of barriers to access to education and training which confront disadvantaged adults. NIACE/REPLAN are therefore pleased to be able to publish this booklet, put together by a group of people working in Adult Education in the Southampton Area, which provides a positive demonstration of how such barriers can be tackled. It documents in a brief and readable form a variety of approaches to specific access problems and provides a useful model for other policy makers and practitioners who might wish to illustrate in a positive way the achievements that have been made in opening up access.

The booklet also puts forward a framework for examining access opportunities and a strategy for their development. As it points out it may not be possible to remove all barriers to access in the short term but the important thing for educators is to start doing something now. We hope this booklet will help you to document your own good practice and will strengthen commitment to breaking down the barriers.

## Acknowledgements

The Working Group which has planned the framework for this publication and drawn the Case Studies together was made up of Peter Cowperthwaite, Rennie Johnston and Meg Ryves, to whom thanks are due. The work of the group was done on behalf of the Southampton Education Panel, an independent forum for all Adult Education providers in the greater Southampton area.

We would like to thank the following people for contributing case studies: Joan Pittman, Suki Sitara, Peter Cowperthwaite, Nigel Mintram, Anne Grindley, Sylvia Waghorn, Meg Ryves, Kris Lord, Jane Thompson, Jenny Bird, Irene MacWilliam, Sue Leahy, Rennie Johnston, Sally Day.

These case studies are 'snapshots' from a particular period in time. In most cases considerable progress has been made since the time they were written.

We would also like to thank HAPSU (The Hampshire Adult Programme and Strategies Unit) for the financial support and co-operation in producing this booklet.

# Using this Booklet

## A Working Definition of Access – a Case Study Approach

The working group started from our individual knowledge of existing practice. We recognised that our understanding of the term 'access' was based on the common ground shared by a number of access initiatives in the greater Southampton area.

These initiatives included examples of targetted courses, linked skill courses, integration projects, informal education in community groups, attempts to improve counselling and guidance processes.

It was clear that in all of these examples there was an identifiable barrier which discriminated against some section of the population. In some instances the barrier was physical; for example, lack of lift facilities discriminated against people in wheelchairs. In others it was cultural; for example, it is more interesting and relevant for many women to understand women's experience through the eyes of women writers rather than to study traditional male-dominated literature.

We therefore set about trying to list the main barriers and the groups they particularly discriminated against (see page 3). Our next step was to identify strategies for tackling these barriers attempted by practitioners in the Southampton Travel-to-Work area. The result is the set of case studies in section 2 which form the main part of this booklet. These case studies are briefly introduced and characterised on pages 4–5 and then are more closely described and analysed from page 6 onwards. They are offered not as models of good practice but rather as examples from which we can all learn.

Although this booklet is about work in the Southampton area we are sure it will provide some good ideas for improving access in your area. In looking at how relevant these case studies are for you, you may wish to focus on the 'Barriers to access' grid on page 3 and work out how many of the barriers exist in your working situation and what you can do about them. This list of barriers to access and the likely groups to be affected by each barrier are perhaps the key things to remember as you work through the booklet.

You may want to dip into particular case studies which are relevant to your working practice – for example, you may find case study 3 helpful in taking the first steps to set up a community-based creche. The brief commentary on the case studies on pages 4–5 will help you locate the case studies most useful to you.

At a policy level your concern could be to shift the emphasis of the work in your department or institution. In this case, you may find it helpful to examine the models given at the end of the booklet, work through the case studies in greater detail and try to place them on a continuum (see 'A Framework for Looking at Access Opportunities' page 22); and then use this exercise to rethink how best to develop access in your particular working situation (see 'A Strategy for Developing Access Opportunities', page 23).

It may not be possible to remove all barriers to access in the short term. The important thing for educators is to :

– **start doing something now** and

– **have a personal and then an institutional strategy** which acknowledges the many different barriers to access and is commited to facing up to them and removing them in the longer-term.

# Barriers to access

To consider better access to education opportunities, one needs first to identify the barriers to access that already exist. It is possible to identify 16 separate (but often linked) barriers to access – these are listed in the grid below. Next to each barrier on the grid are examples of groups of people significantly affected by these barriers.

| Barriers to access | Examples of groups affected | Case Study |
|---|---|---|
| **Money** | Poor unwaged | .... *1* |
| **Value Dominance (Race, Gender, Social Class)** | Black community, women, working class | .... *2* |
| **Childcare** | Single Parents, women | .... *3* |
| **Physical Disability** | Physically disabled, deaf, blind | .... *4* |
| **Bureaucracy** | People without confidence, with limited time | .... *5* |
| **Timing** | Shift Workers, part-time workers | .... *6* |
| **Information** | People without access to existing information channels | .... *7* |
| **Language (in Publicity)** | Those put off by formal English | .... *8* |
| **Language (in Learning)** | Non-English speakers | .... *9* |
| **Previous Education** | People with negative school experience, without qualifications | .... *10* |
| **Location** | People with personal commitments without private transport | .... *11* |
| **Ownership of Resources** | People too dependent on institutions for resources | .... *12* |
| **Previous Experience** | People depressed by their own situation; for example unemployed | .... *13* |
| **Lack of Confidence** | People who think or have been told they could not cope with a particular subject | .... *14* |
| **Inappropriate Structure of Courses** | People unable to progress from ABE to GCSE or other provision | .... *15* |
| **Irrelevant Content** | People wanting/needing to relate learning to their own life | .... *16* |

# The case studies – a guide

On the following pages different case studies are included which detail how each of these barriers have been tackled in the Southampton area. These approaches are not meant to be perfect models, but each case study shows the steps taken, the problems faced and the results achieved. They offer pointers and methods for practitioners to adopt, amend and develop according to their own particular working situations.

Perhaps the most fundamental barrier to access is **money** or lack of it, and many other barriers are related to finance. Whilst most providers offer reductions for the unemployed and others on benefits, there is still a problem in making adult education attractive and cheap enough for all. The first case study, from the Waterside area of Southampton, demonstrates how a bridge can be built between free adult basic education and provision that charges fees. Interestingly this approach did not prove very expensive for the sponsoring Waterside Institute.
(See Outcomes, page 6).

Of course, money is not the only barrier to access – there are also significant **cultural barriers**. Adult education (partly because of the fees it charges and the premises it uses) often has an 'image' that can immediately put off a large number of people including working-class and ethnic minority groups.

Our second case study shows how specific steps have been taken to avoid many of these cultural barriers and to change this image so that adult education becomes responsive to the interests and needs of a group of Asian women. In this way, the group and their support workers were able to develop at Clovelly Road, Southampton a form of adult education which was relevant and important to the women involved, but significantly different from conventional classes.

Some barriers are very obvious, especially to those whom they most directly affect. Lack of **creche provision** and reasonable **access arrangements for disabled people** automatically prevent a large number of adults from taking part in learning opportunities. The national and local outlooks are not promising – it is proving difficult to direct scarce funds to these important areas. Case studies 3 and 4 show two local examples which give an indication of just how many people might be excluded by such barriers and how these barriers have been tackled seriously.

While there may need to be new types and forms of adult education activities geared to the interests of a number of different groups, access to existing provision can also be improved. Institutions often frighten off potential students by the unnecessary **administrative barriers** they erect. The bigger the institution the worse it often is. For example, many colleges have an administrative system that may suit their staff but which is too complicated and time-consuming for any new student without a lot of confidence and time to spare. Case study 5 identifies ways in which all educational institutions, especially colleges, can reduce bureaucracy and become more 'user-friendly'.

As an extension of this, case study 6 looks at more **flexible timing** of provision. It shows how Southampton Technical College is trying to make an education approach relevant to shift workers and others who, for years, have missed out on educational activities because of their irregular work, or family or other commitments.

Before adults can get involved in adult education for the first time, they need to know what is going on and where. Case study 7 shows how the SEIGA organisation is trying to make sure that basic **information** is readily available to as many people as possible, not just those who know the system.

Publicity and information must also be in **language** that makes sense to ordinary people – the Women's Education Centre in Shirley, Southampton has been very successful for several years in attracting working-class women to the activities they run and in relating adult education to their particular interests and needs. Jane Thompson's case study number 8 on writing leaflets shows how this works and how it has been successful whilst also challenging some conventional notions about leaflets and the expectations of working-class students.

**Language** is clearly a barrier for those whose **mother tongue is not English**. English as a Second Language classes are important here. But to go beyond this and develop access to wider provision it is also necessary to advertise in languages other than English some classes or courses. However, that is not the end of the process. Case Study 9 from the Argyle Centre, Southampton shows how an additional ESL tutor was used as a resource for both second-language students and the tutor in a typing class. Obviously it is expensive to involve two tutors. Nevertheless, something like this is necessary to develop wider access for those with English as their second language.

It is now generally recognised that a lot of people have not learned much from their **previous education**, often for a number of different reasons. Many of them are ready to try a 'second chance' when they are older. Case study 10 from Eastleigh College of Further Education shows some of the factors that need to be taken into consideration in designing and promoting such Access courses, as well as documenting the effects such courses can have on adults returning to study.

Many people want to take part in adult education but cannot get to existing centres because of **personal commitments** (family, part-time job etc). In case study 11 the Unwaged Learning Project, based at Southampton University, reached out to a group of women in the Shirley Warren estate and developed an educational approach with them at a convenient local centre. This case study shows how flexible such an approach needs to be in order to take account of local ties.

Once adults get interested in education they can become very strongly motivated. One limitation to this is the availability of educational resources and support – mostly adults have to fit in to the existing timetables of educational institutions. The Respond base in Shirley, Southampton, in case study 12, offers unwaged adults better learning and follow-up opportunities because they have **ownership of their own learning resources**. Over the years and with the support of Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council, members of the base have been able to acquire a number of their own learning resources (tools, computers, typewriters, photography equipment, self-study materials etc.) and these can be used at the convenience of the unwaged members rather than under the conditions of an institution.

Being unemployed is not easy and many **unemployed** adults can become **depressed by their situation** and the shortage of employment opportunities. Southampton University's New Directions course in case study 13 shows how adult education can relate to experience that, on the face of it, offers little that is positive. The course starts with people's experiences of unemployment and moves on, firstly to a wider understanding of why there is widespread unemployment in this and other countries, and secondly to build self-confidence, solidarity and support at the same time as identifying what different choices and options are open to the people on the course.

Of course, **lack of confidence** is a major problem for adults returning to study. Many people say that they just "cannot do Maths" while recognising how important it is in modern life and work. Case study 14 shows how such fears can be tackled and how Maths (and other subjects) can be better understood and developed by adults. Case study 15 takes us one step further to provide flexible and **student-centred course structures.**

The last case study covers an important barrier to adult education access – **irrelevant content**. Many people still think that education is something completely different from life. While it is at times necessary to go beyond our own experience to develop our learning fully, this does not mean that learning cannot be related to our everyday lives and concerns. Case study 16 from Totton shows how a topic like women writers can become more 'real' and 'alive' by relating directly to the interests and problems of the women students involved. Learning can relate to everyday life and still be critical and rigorous.

# Basic education project, Totton and Waterside Institute

### Background

The problem was one of moving students on from free Basic Education provision to fee-paying mainstream classes. Course fees have proved both a practical and a psychological barrier. Consequently there were three main difficulties to overcome.

- Lack of knowledge of fee remission and how to obtain it. Procedures were not clear and often too complicated.
- Lack of opportunities to try out an activity before making quite a high initial financial outlay.
- Going from a free group with no financial risk involved to one with a fairly high fee creates a psychological barrier for some people.

**Main barrier** – payment of fees

**Other associated barriers** – transport, creche, attitudes of tutors.

### How the barriers were tackled

- Fee remissions were prominently and clearly publicised and procedures made as simple and readily available as possible. ABE students were given this information within their groups.
- Bridging/Link courses created 'financial bridges' by being of shorter length and/or partly funded by ABE or alternative funding.
- Opportunities were created for trying or 'tasting' activities.

  Taster opportunities were key to the overall strategy, and were effected by:

- Gaining the Institute's agreement to vouchers being issued to students who had been attending an ABE group for three terms or longer. They could use the voucher to join another course for £2 (the minimum fee in Totton and Waterside).
- Organising a free Taster Day on a Saturday in the first week of September where ABE students could also enrol.
- Organising two Taster Sessions for the following term in the evening.

### Outcomes

- Overall 30 vouchers were used (27 in the first term and 3 in the second term).
- Forty people attended the Taster Day. 32 people enrolled for 28 courses.
- Of the 27 people enrolling in the first term, 16 rejoined with only two claiming a fee remission.
- The Institute has adopted the voucher scheme on a continuing basis.

### Key Points

- Giving the vouchers actually resulted in increased revenue from sixteen students for the Institute.
- Funding might still be needed for Taster Sessions.
- The students were followed up after joining the class and some needed further counselling/ support.
- The cost of public transport (as well as the lack of it in some areas) can be a very real barrier and highlights a very practical need for locally based groups/activities.

**Contact** for further information:
ABE Co-ordinator,
Totton and Waterside Community Education Institute.
Tel: Southampton (0703) 848388

**Case Study** by Joan Pittman

# Asian women's drop-in, Clovelly Road, Central Southampton

### Background

Existing provision was eurocentric; that is to say that non-European cultural values were not represented. Asian women had a total lack of identification with the Adult Education system as it existed and therefore no information on how to use the system nor desire to use it. The existing framework was unable to meet their needs.

**Main barrier** – Value dominance (white, eurocentric).

### Other associated barriers

- The Asian women did not know what they could get out of the traditional adult education system or even what they wanted to get from it.
- The building itself was a Victorian structure which inhibited its use for informal 'drop in' purposes by the women.
- Lack of confidence in mixed race women's groups.
- Language barriers.
- Unease due to men being in the building at the same time, stemming from different cultural values.

### How the barriers were tackled

- The venue was changed to a local Community Centre, so that it provided an informal setting where the women could meet on their own.
- The curriculum was geared more to different cultural values.
- The sessions were not structured and were initially open ended. (At that time only English was offered and it was made clear that this was not compulsory and that they could come even if they did not want to learn English).
- The women exchanged mutual skills such as sewing, embroidery etc.
- Information was given gradually on what else was available so that they got some idea of what was being offered by Adult Education.
- They visited a similar centre in London to give them some ideas on what they could do with the session available to them.

### Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

- That it was going to be a slow and gradual process. The number of women coming to these sessions has gradually increased from 8 to an average of 22. This process has taken 2 years.
- Consistent home visits were necessary to encourage the women and to convince them that the environment will be 'safe' and will be within the cultural and religious parameters they set.
- Women needed time and space to decide for themselves what activities they wanted to do.
- A constant demand on the part of the women to increase the sessions and the steady increase in numbers suggest that this is only the 'tip of the iceberg' in terms of potential development.

### Outcomes:

- Two visits to London, including a holiday play scheme when women and children visited the Commonwealth Institute.
- Steadily increasing participation in sessions.
- Established Asian dressmaking class with an Asian tutor.
- Badminton class.
- English class.
- Other regular activities include singing, dancing, cooking, keep-fit and exercise.

### Contact:

Asian Women's drop-in
Clovelly Centre
Clovelly Road

Further information from:
Head of Centre,
Argyle Centre,
Argyle Road,
Southampton.
Tel: Southampton (0703) 334467

**Case Study** by Suki Sitara, Dahlia Jamil, Baljinder Kenth and Farhana Morris.

# Creche provision for a community education project, Calmore Estate, Totton

**Background**
A small team consisting of two community workers, two community education workers and an estate resident had together made contact, over a period of three months, with other women residents interested in coming together to form a community education group.

**Main barrier** – childcare

Most of the women had responsibility for children under five. They would be unable to participate in the group unless a creche was provided.

The only resource for funding a creche (workers, room hire, toys and equipment, insurance etc.) was a small budget (less than £50), which the Community Education Centre had allocated from the surplus made on students' fees.

**Other associated barriers** – finance, previous experience

- The group was being formed from a number of contacts whose only shared identity was that they were women living on a particular estate.
- It was going to take time to identify possible common interests and goals and a group identity.
- It was not possible therefore to charge for the sessions to cover costs of a group leader and hire the room etc. The problem had to be solved by moving other adult education resources around.
- There is no County budget for this type of work.

**How the barriers were tackled**
- The Community Centre offered a free let on the meeting room for three weeks and agreed an indefinite free let on a second room for the creche.
- The 'Institute' allocated its £50 to pay for creche workers. In practice an average of four workers over three weeks was needed which used the whole amount.
- Toys were lent by a Mothers and Toddlers group using the same centre.
- When initial funding ended the WEA (Workers Education Association) agreed to fund the group for six weeks, ie. to pay for the room rental, creche workers and a group leader (tutor).
- Grants totalling £150 were obtained from the Totton and District Council for Community Service and Totton Town Council.
- The group raised £80 by running a stall and made a small surplus each week on their coffee account to put towards room rental.

**Outcomes**
The group is now thriving with regular weekly attendances of between 12 and 20. A variety of activities have been sampled including; D.I.Y., Women's Health, How to Write a Will and a local councillor has attended to discuss problems on the estate, for example in relation to maintenance of play facilities.

**Key points**
This is an unsatisfactory way to resource community education student support as it is a piecemeal solution and cannot be permanently sustained and integrated. Resources for childcare ought to be an integral part of Community Education provision.

**Contact** for further information:
Totton Community Education Centre
Testwood School
Testwood Lane
Totton, Hants.
Tel: Southampton (0703) 863745

**Case Study** by Peter Cowperthwaite

# Access for the disabled at Eastpoint Centre, Southampton

## Background

Eastpoint is a community education project which provides social and recreational facilities for local people of all ages, and supports diverse community groups both within and outside the Centre.

**Main barrier** – physical access to the buildings

Eastpoint occupies the buildings of the former Hightown Secondary School. Even the ground floor of the school was almost entirely inaccessible to wheelchairs. This problem could be partially relieved by the construction of ramps, although this is not made easy by the rambling nature of the architecture.

**Other associated barriers** – Provision of facilities for disabled people: toilets; showers; design of equipment; layout of rooms; provision of parking spaces; attitudes of able bodied staff and users.

## How the barriers were tackled

- Outreach work to existing groups in Southampton was initiated since there appeared to be no articulate/organised local group of disabled people lobbying for access.

- The Centre's local network of professionals (including City Council Community Development, LEA community education workers, health visitors) provided most of the initial contacts.

- NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) already has projects based at Eastpoint. The Centre worked with them to devise a Community Programme for environmental improvements to Eastpoint. This included work on access.

- Disabled people were invited at an early stage, before there was full access, to seek their advice, and to increase the awareness of this barrier amongst staff and users. A phased development was planned beginning with the creation of ground floor access at as many points as possible. Social Services advised on the standards of design.

- £1,250 was raised from various grant-making trusts to cover the costs of the materials, but the Board of Management had agreed to underwrite this. Several members of the Baord had worked with disabled people before and were very supportive.

## Outcomes

- Access to most of the ground floor is now possible, including the following facilities: reception, main hall, social club bar, gymnasia, cafeteria, several meeting rooms, staff offices.

- Two regular groups for disabled and able bodied people meet on Monday and Friday nights; usage by the neighbourhood Day Centre; conference and public meetings which can now be attended by disabled people. These new disabled users are now being encouraged to continue lobbying the Board for second phase (primarily lift installation) facilities.

## Key points

- Early participation by disabled people highlighted the needs, and ensured that the plans for access were practical.

- Phased construction, although not ideal, ensured some access as soon as possible and encouraged the feeling that progress was being made.

- Disabled people themselves continue effectively to highlight the access shortcomings, although they need support in campaigning and fund-raising.

**Contact** for further information:
The Manager
Eastpoint
Burgoyne Road
Thornhill
Southampton SO2 6PB
Tel. Bursledon (042 121) 2648 or 2931

**Case study** by Nigel Mintram

# Reception and bureaucratic difficulties in local colleges

**Background**
The county co-ordinator for education work with unemployed adults identified the attitudes and approach of reception staff in colleges as a potential barrier to access. One example was an unemployed adult going to a local college to enquire about a course she was interested in. The secretary at reception refused to give her a form to apply; in her opinion, there was no point as she did not believe the student would be eligible for a grant. The student persevered and is now on the course. This kind of experience highlights the need for some guidance for key administrative staff in colleges and the need to encourage colleges to try and minimise their bureaucratic barriers to access.

**Main barrier** – bureaucracy
Adults not made welcome in colleges, including problems with reception, fee remission, prospectus, telephone and message taking procedures.

**Other associated barriers** – intimidating buildings; inadequate facilities at colleges for adults; enrolment procedure; no childcare facilities; unsuitable timing of courses; no guidance service; irrelevant entry requirements; inflexible start and finish dates of course.

**How the main barrier was tackled**
The county co-ordinator consulted with the Southampton and Area Unemployed Education Group and designed guidelines for colleges and institutes to help them make their institutions more user-friendly. These guidelines were in the form of a checklist and covered all the barriers mentioned above.

**Further problems identified and issues raised in the process**
- Possible hostility from reception staff; being seen to be telling them the obvious, and perhaps insulting those who did not need such guidelines.
- Difficulty in designing one model for application in 15 FE Colleges and 13 AE Institutes.

**Outcomes**
- The problem was discussed by the Hampshire FE Senior Management Team in order to sent out some County Guidelines. (This has yet to happen).
- The checklist was published in two regional REPLAN newsletters.

**Key points:**
- The need to train non-teaching staff in the importance of welcoming/helping adults approaching colleges was identified as crucial in order to break down bureaucratic barriers.
- The need to involve Registrars in the discussion of the system of remitting fees was highlighted.
- Some recommendations require funding, for example, comfortable places to sit, signs for visitors, building in 'surgery' time when a named contact person will deal with fee enquiries, etc.

**Contact** further information:
Adult Learning Initiatives Co-ordinator
HAPSU
FE Division
The Castle
Winchester
Hants SO23 8UG
Tel: Winchester (0962) 846285

**Case Study** by Anne Grindley

*case study no. 5*

# Flexi-study at Southampton Technical College

**Background**
A potential barrier for adults is that a class is held at a set time each week. If a student cannot attend regularly then the study cannot be pursued. Examples of major groups of people affected are those on shifts, those who work at sea and possibly adults in the armed forces who may be called away at short notice, and casual and part-time workers with irregular hours. Other examples of affected individuals have included those who cannot leave school age children in time for a 6.15 pm start.

**Main barrier** – timing

**Associated barriers** – finance

No current possibility of enrolling on a termly basis; some students do not have a regular amount of study time, many people live a long way from the Technical College; lecturing staff are often not available to answer telephone enquiries; poor reception service.

**How the main barrier was tackled**
Section leaders at the Technical College were approached to find out whether their subject could be offered with a flexi-study approach. Commitment at a senior staff level was gained as one-to-one teaching time needs to be recognised as part of a lecturer's timetable. The latter involved union negotiation and discussion at the academic board, which raised the profile of the proposed provision. A leaflet was produced giving details of flexi-study possibilities.

**Further problems identified and issues raised in the process**
- Initial contact between student and tutor sometimes proves difficult to timetable.
- Administrative staff need to develop procedures for buying and selling of distance learning materials. It is important that the tutor-in-charge works with them in detail through these and other problems.
- The GCSE English course requires students to take part in oral assessments, over four evenings. This required good liaison with teachers of the subject, so that the distance learners could be accommodated with established groups.

**Outcomes**
- A new post has now been created in reception.
- It is now possible for open learning students to enrol on a weekly basis.
- The first member of the armed forces who enrolled for English and Maths flexi-study achieved 'A' and 'B' grades. This is an example of the high achievement rate in flexi-study.
- A steady growth of subjects offered in flexi-study.
- Growth of other open learning opportunities, for example, BTEC units.

**Key points:**
- Financial procedures need to complement more flexible entry. Previously, if a student wished to study for four terms she/he had to pay for two years and then claim two terms' payment back. This has now been resolved.
- Setting up flexi-study usually takes a great deal of time and commitment from the staff, but rewards are high for students and staff alike.
- The provision is still limited due to lack of resources.

**Contact** for further information:
Flexi-Study Organiser
Southampton Technical College
St Mary's Street
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 635222

**Case study** by Sylvia Waghorn

# Educational information at SEIGA

(Southampton Educational Information and Guidance for Adults)

### Background

SEIGA (Southampton Education Information and Guidance for Adults) has tried a variety of outreach activities to take information to potential consumers rather than wait for them to find it.

But how do members of the general public find information on the wide range of learning opportunities?

**Main barrier** – information

**Associated barrier** – bureaucracy

### How the barriers were tackled

- SEIGA puts a caravan in Southampton Precinct two weeks prior to enrolment, giving information to approximately 5,000 adults in a two week period.
- A guide to all part-time adult education provision is assembled by SEIGA. This is distributed to each college and adult education centre.
- General information is needed by libraries, Job-centres, etc., on first contact points with providers. A leaflet containing all relevant phone numbers has been produced.
- Advice points at a main Job-centre and libraries have been staffed by SEIGA on a regular basis at various times.
- A leaflet containing information about learning opportunities for unwaged/unemployed adults is produced in conjunction with the Respond Unemployed Learning Project.
- Contact is made with tutors of access courses, for example, 'More confidence for women', 'Wider Opportunities for Women', and visits arranged by a staff member from SEIGA to talk to their students.
- Ocean Sound Radio station produces a learning opportunities slot at 5.45 pm each day. This can be used by any adult education provider.
- Information/network visits are made to staff meetings, for example, the Careers Service.
- SEIGA has an entry in the Yellow pages.
- Guidance interviews are also set up outside Southampton itself.

### Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

- Many of the activities are high in demand on staff time.
- Staff changes in the network means constant updating of personal contacts.
- Paper publicity may raise expectations which cannot always be met.

### Outcomes

- The network developed by SEIGA generates as many enquiries as present staff can cope with.
- Figures show an increased level of take up of courses.
- A decrease in public frustration at lack of available guidance.
- A referral point is available to all providers who have difficult enquiries.

### Key points

- Outreach contacts with non-traditional students take time to develop. Evaluation of outreach on a short-term basis does not show the whole picture and needs to be undertaken on a longer-term basis to see the real impact
- There must be an accompanying and continuous process of research and information back-up to support any guidance service.

**Contact** for further information:
Head of Unit
SEIGA
Argyle Annexe
Argyle Road
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 332676

**Case study** by Meg Ryves

*case study no. 7*

# Language in publicity for the Women's Education Centre, Southampton

## Background

In a world in which 'professionally produced' advertising literature is extremely sophisticated and attractive, the leaflets educators produce cannot afford to be poorly presented, badly reproduced or ill-designed. Due to high costs, adults and community education workers often end up turning out semi-legible faded copy, with skewed text, on poor quality paper with at least some vital information missing about date, venue, fees or creche. It is not surprising that piles of such leaflets gather dust in draughty corners or never get read, except by the faithful or fanatical.

At the other extreme, relatively more affluent providers like the University pay, what to many of us seems like a fortune, to produce professionally printed, accurate and detailed publicity for their courses in a special newspaper. You would have to be a 'Times' rather than a 'Mirror' reader to contemplate reading it and be prepared to overcome the obvious deterrent that it looks **boring, boring, boring . . .**

**Main barriers** – ill-conceived publicity, use of inappropriate language

**Associated barriers** – uninspiring presentation, inaccurate information.

## How the barriers were tackled

When **Second Chance for Women** was started in the early eighties the organisers wanted to make sure that publicity for the course got into the hands of those for whom it was designed – working class women on low incomes or benefits, with little previous education, who might, for a variety of reasons be wanting to make a major shift in their lives.

There was criticism of the use of the terms "working class" and "women's rights" in the leaflets, for fear of alienating people. The organisers were also criticised for asking women to write a letter of application and come for an interview, something which those 'in the know' said would put them off.

## Outcomes

Consistently it has been found that women who had never been to any other kind of adult education, and who would be unlikely to turn up for more conventional provision, have regularly applied for Second Chance, and talked about feeling as though it was 'meant for them'. In designing the leaflet colloquial language was used about the realities of women's lives in ways that women can identify with – being stuck at home, feeling lonely, feeling 'there must be more to life than housework and dirty nappies'. Cartoon images which do not patronise or make fun of women but which reflect the problems we all know about – overwork, isolation, sexism – were deliberately chosen. Authoritarian instructions about registration, paying fees, making arrangements were avoided in favour of a tone which sounded welcoming, informal and friendly.

The interview and the letter of application was presented as 'a discussion' about what women were looking for and wanting to get out of the course. We certainly wanted women to know that we were taking their educational opportunities as seriously as they do, and avoided those telling little phrases used by many community educators to patronise and trivialise women's educational needs – 'calling all mums', 'drop in for a chat' and 'coffee and confidence'.

## Key points

You do not need to be a professional graphic artist to design a good leaflet – but it does require care and attention.

- Get the tone and content right.
- Make sure the layout looks attractive – bold heading, not too much text, not too crowded and an eye catching illustration.
- Make sure it is typed or written in bold black print so that it will reproduce clearly. Make sure it is set straight on the page.
- Choose a bright (rather than wishy-washy) coloured paper if possible, or if not, white.
- Double check that all the details about venue, timing, costs and creche are included in a clear and simple way and are accurate

Then it is all down to well thought out, imaginative and appropriate distribution, a subject which needs another case study all of its own.

**Contact** for further information:
Women's Education Centre
Stafford Road, Shirley
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703)

**Case study** by Jane Thompson

# Second language back-up for typewriting at the Argyle Centre, Southampton

## Background

It is clear to tutors who have worked with second language speakers for many years that many are caught in a Catch 22 situation. You cannot do Adult Education until you have more English – but English is best learnt 'by doing', by using language in context and by having more contact with English speakers.

Students showed an interest in typing, and one or two had already attended a typing class, but had found it hard work. The tutor identified various areas in which she felt students had problems. They often did not seem to know what to do and if asked if they understood, they would often suggest they were OK, whereas in reality they were not, but could not express this.

Communication on a very simple YES/NO level was all that was possible, and thus was frustrating for both tutor and students.

The group was ideal for many students because it was in the afternoon and had a creche.

**Main barrier** – language (for Non-English Speakers)

**Other associated barriers** – child care, money, and timing.

## How the barriers were tackled

It was decided for a trial period to introduce a second tutor (ESL) to the group to give language and literacy back-up where students needed it.

The typing tutor would run the class in as normal a way as possible and would be responsible for the typing input to the group. The second tutor would look at communication in the group, advise the tutor on ways to explain something in more simple terms, perhaps in a more visual way, perhaps using pictures to explain.

The second tutor would also do language and literacy work with students on a regular basis, thus systematically building up their knowledge of the vocabulary and instructions specifically relating to typing and office skills.

This back-up was offered to all students in the group, not just to the second language speakers. Many students had spelling problems and general problems of punctuation which affected the content of their typing.

## Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

One of the difficulties that the two tutors found was that they did not have enough time together out of class to think about and plan jointly what they were doing and aiming at in this new venture.

Integration of activity really needs to be considered in the initial planning of a course, and time allowed for it, in experimental courses of this type.

## Key points

- Do we make too many assumptions about language in adult education classes, with knowledge of English often taken for granted?
- Do we allocate sufficient time and funds to plan and resource experimental courses?

**Contact** for further information:
ABE Co-ordinator
Southampton Institute for A, Y and CE
Argyle Centre
Argyle Road
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 334467

**Case study** by Kris Lord

# Access course at Eastleigh College of FE

**Background**
The majority of women students attracted to Access courses did not continue their secondary education because they either:

- Married/had children early.
- Went (enthusiastically at the time) into secretarial work.

Some students (men and women) were prevented from staying at school by parental attitudes.

**Main barrier** – lack of previous education

**Associated barriers**
- Social prejudices against adults (particularly women) changing direction.
- Childcare
- Finance – students cannot afford to give up jobs as grant is too small.
- Students own belief that:

  – it is too late to study
  – they may not be able to achieve.
- Further education buildings are frequently forbiddingly institutional.
- Attitudes of outside organisations (eg. DSS) to adults returning to full time education can be damagingly negative.

**How the barriers were identified and tackled**
- A new Head of Department was appointed who highlighted the lack of Access courses.
- At the same time an established member of staff identified the lack of short courses for adults within the college.
- A county adviser convened a working party of appropriate staff to consider Access courses.
- Eastleigh decided to join with Highbury and Farnborough in a consortium of colleges offering Access. This has proved useful as a support mechanism for Access tutors.
- Hampshire LEA decided to validate three Access courses which are recognised for full time grants.
- Departmental duties time was used to develop the syllabus, put a team together and develop links with Highbury College of FE.

**Further problems identified and issues raised in the process**
- Validation: the course was validated by Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) through Portsmouth Polytechnic. Without this validation Access students cannot apply to Northern Universities.
- The full time Access course makes a great demand on the creche facility thereby decreasing places available for other adult students.
- The need for a creche governs the hours available for the course.
- An evening library service is not available so students cannot come back to study when their partners can take responsibility for children.
- Attitudes towards adults within the college are not always positive.
- Grant organisation for late applications means hardship and/or bank loans.

**Outcomes**
- Satisfaction rate from students very high. Over 85% go into Higher Education; others decide not to (that is to say, are not simply rejected).
- Two groups are now running. A New Technology course is about to commence.
- Low drop out rate.

**Key points**
- There may well be students, constrained by other barriers, who do not consider the Access course.
- One reason the drop-out rate is low is the commitment of Access and subject tutors to individual counselling.
- Proper support and counselling is a high demand on staff time and resilience.
- It is essential to have institutional and County support for such an initiative.

**Contact** for further information:
Access tutor
Department of Leisure and Foundation Studies
Eastleigh College of FE
Eastleigh
Tel: Eastleigh (0703) 3644011 ext. 229

**Case study** by Jenny Bird

# Shirley Warren women's health group

## Background

From September to December 1988 a group of women met at the Warren Centre, a community centre attached to a primary school in the middle of the Warren estate. The Shirley Warren Women's Health Group, which met weekly, was formed. There were two outcomes; firstly a women's health course, and secondly the development of an on-going group.

**Main barrier** – location of provision

Most of the women were limited to a small geographical area by the time factor and cost involved in travelling further afield. They were restricted by domestic responsibilities, for example:

- Two of the women each had three children under 5, making travel by bus, or walking very far extremely difficult.
- Two children had to be collected from morning nursery at 11.45.
- Several women had to be home to give dinner to children coming home from school, or to husbands coming off, or going on, shifts.
- Two of the women, who had elderly housebound relatives living with them, could only come for short times when 'sitters' were available.

**Associated barriers** – finance, part-time working, transport, lack of family support, childcare, domestic responsibilities.

Weekly bus fares to and from a course would have been a problem for many of the women who were on very low incomes, or state benefit.

Three women had part-time jobs which fitted in around domestic responsibilities, (one as an early morning cleaner and two as school 'dinner ladies'), further reducing their available 'free' time to attend the group, and making travel time impossible.

## How the barriers were tackled

The geographical restriction was overcome by holding the course/group meetings in the local community centre, located in the middle of the estate in the grounds of the local school. This reduced travel time, involved no travel costs, and fitted in with nursery pick-ups, school dinner duties etc. A further advantage was that the women had been meeting at the Warren Centre for coffee mornings, bingo and other social events so felt they had some say in how the building should be used, increasing their confidence and level of control. There was also space for a creche as well as play equipment that could be used.

## Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

- There was only one possible time for the group to meet (Tuesday mornings), due to other users of the building (Mother and Toddlers, Playgroup, Bingo). The group would have preferred to meet at a different time because . . .
- Some of the women helped serve food and drink to the children at break on a Tuesday, while others prepared sandwiches and tables for afternoon bingo. Although this was fitted in around the group as much as possible there were frequent disruptions to deal with deliveries, caretakers, etc.

## Outcomes

Despite the disruptions the group met weekly for two hours, and this was the only way this particular group were able to meet at all. The group continues to meet weekly with support from one of the community centre workers, and they are now doing writing and reading at home as well.

## Key points

In order to overcome the barriers faced by the Shirley Warren women, and other working class women, education has to 'go to them' not just physically in terms of location but in terms of times, duration and attendant support (childcare, help with housebound relatives).

**Contact** for further information:
Lecturer in Community Education
Department of Adult Education
Southampton University
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 595000 ext. 2167

**Case study** by Irene Macwilliam

# The Respond learning base for unwaged adults

## Background

Normally in adult education, groups 'borrow' resources from providing institutions. They can use them within the guidelines of the institution, but they cannot be in control of them, have access when they want or decide what new resources are needed for their purposes.

**Main barrier** – ownership of resources

**Other associated barriers** – lack of money; lack of confidence; timing.

## How the barriers were tackled

The Respond base was set up in an old laboratory building on the Western Adult Education site. It began as a direct response to the requests of a small group of unwaged adults who wanted to have an information and work-base of their own. Although the base was owned by Hampshire County Council, from the outset it was made clear that, as far as possible, it would be run and controlled by the unemployed people who used it. It was converted for Respond to use through a combination of the efforts of the unwaged adults involved and some essential financial assistance from Southampton Institute. It was intended to be an education resource and support base for unwaged adults where, amongst other things, they could learn from each other in some form of learning exchange.

This still left the problem of resources and equipment – there was very little available, and at first the Respond group had to make do with equipment and resources that were largely 'begged borrowed or stolen'. After 6 months of existence and despite the support of the Institute, the base still had few good quality resources to call its own. A funding group was set up – it was open to anyone who came to the base and was supported by the full-time project worker who had contacts and knowledge of some potential funding sources. However the decisions about what funding to apply for were taken by the funding group itself. Gradually the group developed knowledge of funding sources, self-confidence and skills in applying for funds, making full use of their unemployed identity.

## Outcomes

In this way, the group began to apply for various funds that were available. 3 years on they had 5 micro-computers/word-processors of their own; photography and video equipment; woodwork, bike maintenance and gardening tools; sewing machines; kitchen equipment; and a number of self-study support materials. Funds for resources have been received from Southampton City Council, Hampshire County Council, IBM, Shell, and a number of community agencies.

Decisions about how to use the resources and what new ones to apply for are taken at a regular monthly Open Meeting at the base. Participation is a very real thing at these meetings. Groups made up of base members are in practical control of the different resources, for example, through working out a rota for the use of the word-processors, repairing bicycles, developing "hands on" experience, setting their own targets and limits and also building confidence and learning from each other.

## Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

- Administering and organising all the resources – a need for continuity in this important area when there is a constant turn-over of members. Those who have developed some knowledge and expertise often move on to jobs, further education and so on.
- Lack of experience in monitoring on-going costs involved in different funds.
- Up-keep, getting new parts and so on.
- Advice/training for new people on using resources.

A lot of this (but not all) is solved by having a paid co-ordinator who works to the decisions of the Open Meeting, and a few long-standing members who are skilled and experienced in various areas.

**Contact** for further information:
Respond Base
Western AE Centre
Stafford Road
Shirley
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 222013

**Case study** by Sue Leahy

# The New Directions Course,

**Department of Adult Education, Southampton University**

## Background

The experience of unemployment is not normally a positive one – apart from affecting people financially, it often leaves people lacking in confidence and self-esteem and somehow blaming themselves for their unemployment.

**Main barrier** – previous experience

**Other associated barriers** – lack of money; previous education; lack of confidence; location

## How the barriers were tackled

The first problem was getting a group of unemployed and unwaged adults together. The course was called 'New Directions' to give the idea of opening up new possibilities and ideas. Although leaflets and other publicity channels were used, the most effective form of recruitment was on a personal outreach basis, working through existing groups and key people in the community – many people clearly find it easier in the first place to identify with a friendly and interested tutor than with any proposed course content. This personal contact also allowed some personal guidance and counselling and helped tutors to relate the initial programme to people's expressed needs and interests.

The course topics were initially selected by tutors but were later decided by students. The course built on student experience and tried to relate it to local and national events and to more general socio-economic ideas. The first session started with a brainstorm of all the different jobs/work that students have had in their lives. Later, there was a general discussion about whether each job/area of work is decreasing or increasing and why. Tutors fed information and ideas from time to time but the main input came from students. A number of key issues arise from the initial discussions; for example, what is work? Which factors affect the number and type of jobs/work available here and in other parts of the country? How can new jobs be created?

A broader understanding of the structural reasons for unemployment helps students to move away from the idea of personal guilt and responsibility for their own unemployment. It also opens up further topics for investigation and discussion; for example, the local economy; the economic and social costs of unemployment; changing roles between women and men. At the same time, writings (newspaper articles, poems etc.) on these and other topics are used as a stimulus for further reading and writing by students. This mixture of discussion of socio-economic topics allied to individual reading and writing continues for one term until students are ready/confident enough to embark on group projects in the second term.

## Outcomes

The course fostered a group solidarity and support amongst members who stayed on. People gained confidence from the discussion, understood much more about the work around them, and, as a result of the course, became more dynamic and were in a stronger position to take greater control of their lives. Some identified next steps for themselves in education, in voluntary work, in community action, in new jobs; a small minority went on to Higher Education. Several began writing much more frequently – a collection of the writings of students from two different groups was published. A few impressive projects were produced; for example, a well-researched display on pollution in Southampton.

## Further problems identified and issues raised in the process

- Balancing analysis and action – moving on from an analysis of society that is often very depressing for unemployed people. This is much more possible if people can balance this analysis with more positive action like group project work or developing individual writing or study skills.
- Not raising expectations too high – sometimes people who have gained confidence want to do too much all at once.
- Providing enough individual and group support for project work.
- Making sufficient time for individual and group support for project work.
- Making sufficient time for individual counselling and guidance both during and after any such course.

**Contact** for further information:
Lecturer in Community Education
Department of Adult Education
Southampton University
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 595000 ext. 2167

**Case study** by Rennie Johnston

# Women's maths group at the Women's Education Centre

**Main barrier** – lack of confidence

**Associated barriers**

- The assumption by women that they cannot cope with maths and that they will not need the subject in the future. (Often these are messages from parents and schools).
- The fees involved in attending an Adult Education class.
- No day time maths provision.
- No creche.

**How the barriers were identified and tackled:**

The group arose from Second Chance for Women. A substantial percentage of the group identified maths as a subject they had always failed at and something they would like to tackle.

- A woman maths tutor was appointed on a joint initiative between the Women's Education Centre and Western Adult Education Centre.
- The tutor had to recognise the amount of support needed by women who had already failed.
- The maths group met in the same venue as Second Chance for Women.
- The group was available only to students from Second Chance.
- It was held on a day when neither Second Chance groups met.
- A creche was available.
- Good support was given over fee concessions.
- The curriculum was decided largely by students.

**Further problems identified and issues raised**

- The tremendous spread of ability and experience of the students.
- Lack of finance to buy books once preferences had been established. Worksheets were not appropriate as a long term resource.
- Students wishing to go on to Higher Education needed 'O' level.

**Outcomes**

- Two groups were formed – one for students who considered themselves 'basic' and one for those who wanted to 'brush up' skills already learned.
- The students worked as individuals, each taking responsibility for their own learning plan.
- The Centre bought a supply of text books and the tutor operated a scheme for individuals to save weekly towards a book.
- The women already knew each other so gave good mutual support.
- Students who wanted to do a Sociology degree needed 'O' level maths. The tutor negotiated with the Sociology Department at the University that a specific curriculum would be covered, focusing on statistics. This was accepted instead of an 'O' level in maths.

**Key points**

Mathematics classes need supportive tutors who understand the issues and the participants if they are to attract and keep women students.

**Contact** for further information:
Women's Education Centre
Stafford Road
Shirley
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 222013

**Case study** by Meg Ryves

*case study no. 14*

# Moving on from basic maths at Southampton Institute of Adult, Youth and Community Education

### Background
When the Southampton Institute of Adult, Youth and Community Education was formed the learning opportunities in mathematics available to students were confined to basic level courses, (free within the Adult Basic Education provision) and 'O' level, run as a year long vocational course. This provision was irrelevant to a large percentage of students who needed a higher level of content than Adult Basic Education but did not have confidence to attempt 'O' level.

**Main barrier** – inappropriate structure of courses.

### Other associated barriers
- Lack of confidence.
- Location of provision.
- Finance.

### How the barriers were tackled
Negotiations took place between the Principal of the Institute, the appropriate Head of District and the Adult Basic Education Co-ordinator. It was agreed that a new course, called "Access to Maths", at an intermediate level, should be started and that the enrolment for that course would be at the same time as 'O' level. The following September the tutors for Adult Basic Education, Access to Maths and 'O' level enrolled on the same evening and were placed next to each other in the enrolment hall. A list of agreed questions was held by each tutor and as students enrolled they were asked to identify how many of the questions they could answer.

According to their responses they were recommended to enrol at the appropriate level. (The students' wishes overrode the recommendations if there was a conflict).

The Access to Maths and 'O' level classes were held on the same evening in adjoining classrooms and tutors were encouraged to allow a flow of students both ways, especially in the early weeks of term.

To help students moving from free Adult Basic Education classes, termly rather than annual payments were introduced. The fees for Access to Maths were subsidised.

### Further problems identified and issues raised in the process
The 'O' level tutor was very traditional in approach and it took a long time for the changes to be accepted.

### Outcomes
- The class attracted a range of students but the main group was women in their thirties and forties.
- The pre-'O' level provision was spread across the city in English and Maths.
- The drop out of students in the 'O' level group was lower.

### Key points
- The normal collection of fees does not allow for this kind of transition.
- It is important that the process is seen as a team approach by the tutors.

**Contact** for further information:
ABE Co-ordinator
Southampton Institute of A, Y, and CE
Argyle Centre
Argyle Road
Southampton
Tel: Southampton (0703) 334467

**Case study** by Meg Ryves

*case study no. 15*

# Looking at Women Writers' course in Totton

**Background**
Literature can be inaccessible to some women because it fails to reflect their own experiences. In part this comes from a failure to recognise women writers. Also conventional literature has been dominated by male authors and the concerns of men, including their views of women.

Associated with this barrier is a view of writing as the product of literary 'greats' which excludes the contribution we all can make.

**Main barrier** – irrelevant content

**Associated barriers**
- Timing: between 1-3pm (a time convenient for meeting children from school).
- Childcare: creche provided for under fives.
- Environment: made welcoming by running other 'all women' courses at the same time and providing occasions when women students from the different courses could meet together.

**How the barriers were tackled**
- The group had some difficulty finding suitable books of womens' poems but the students also brought poetry written by their families and used feminist magazines which included poetry by non-professional writers. One woman brought early nineteenth century letters written by a woman to a sister in India. The poems of Alice Walker and others by black American women were also studied.
- The first novel was chosen by the tutor – Rebecca West's "Return of the Soldier". It was selected because it was short (all the students read it) and had three strong women characters.
- Others books were chosen by the students and included:

  "Wide Sargasso Sea" – Jean Rhys
  "Hotel du Lac" – Anita Bruckner
  "I know why the caged bird sings" – Maria Angelo
  "The Colour Purple" – Alice Walker
  "Birds of Passage" – Bernice Rubens

- As an all-women group (including of course the tutor) other agendas became mixed in with the study of literature – both stimulated by the literature and the concerns of group members, for example, childcare, and personal relationships. The group became, at the same time, both a literature class and a womens group.

**Outcomes**
The first course has set up its own voluntary readers' group. A number of the course members have decided to form a "Woodcraft' group for their children.

**Key points**
The course did not reach its target group – working class women – so the course has now been re-located in a community setting. (see Case Study no. 3)

**Contact** for further information:
Community Education Worker
Totton Community Education Centre
Testwood Lane
Totton, Hants
Tel: Southampton (0703) 863745

**Case study** by Sally Day

# A framework for looking at access opportunities

Our case studies are not a random selection of different approaches. We were able to identify a pattern which we found helpful and which we put forward here as a framework for analysing questions of access.

About half the case studies are concerned with removing obstacles to existing provision (eg. high fees, bureaucratic procedures etc.) from the paths of potential learners. The other half deal with examples where the adult educator's main role has been to change the provision and hand over greater control to the participants.

So whereas in the first instance access is largely concerned with **clearing the route** to a professionally produced programme of study; in the second, accessibility is largely dealt with in terms of the professional negotiating with users **the terms on which they learn.**

In order to examine these differences in greater depth we have outlined two models in relation to access opportunities. We call the first the 'Provider model' and the second the 'User model'.

| **'Provider Model'** | **'User Model'** |
|---|---|
| Curriculum is fixed and determined by professionals (educators) | Curriculum is negotiated between users and tutors |
| Users take it or leave it – choice is limited to the range of options on offer | Range of options is infinite (subject to resources) |
| Education is concerned with passing on a fixed body of knowledge by an active tutor to relatively passive students | Education is a joint learning experience where the values and knowledge of all participants are recognised. The tutor creates situations in which people learn rather than acting as a font of knowledge |
| There is limited opportunity for negotiation within a group to meet the needs of individual learners | Learners can determine the content and method of the learning. Learners can even be involved in tutor appointments |
| Courses tend to be located in educational establishments. (Our territory) | Courses/groups are located in community settings including people's own homes, community centres, libraries, halls etc. (Their territory) |
| Learning goals are predetermined | Learning goals may change, or grow through experience |
| *Access is solely concerned with the routes people take to reach the fixed position. (For example enrolment procedures, publicity, pre-entry access courses).* | *Access is concerned with changing the nature of the provision to meet users' requirements. (For example, content, place, teaching methods).* |

In practice, there are no hard and fast dividing lines between these two models. Most of the previous case studies will fit into a continuum somewhere between the two extremes. For example, the case study which deals with women's education at Tbtton, whilst having many of the features of a provider model also is concerned with negotiating the curriculum. On the other hand, the case study on the Respond base for unwaged adults hands over ownership of resources to users but nevertheless takes place within an educational institution.

The above models may help educators to think more clearly about access opportunities and so identify the best way forward in their particular working situation. In our final section we attempt to draw out some conclusions about the sorts of strategies that are appropriate in different circumstances and their implications for institutional and LEA policy.

# A strategy for developing access opportunities

The case studies in this booklet have arisen largely as a result of small-scale initiatives by individuals working in different working situations with different constraints. Some have concentrated on improving access to existing provision, whilst others have thought it necessary to change the provision itself in order to make it more accessible to certain groups of people.

Clearly the breaking down of barriers and the development of access opportunities depends on the individual attitudes of educators; institutional organisation and constraints; resources available; and wider policy attitudes of educational authorities and institutions. In developing a strategy to improve access opportunities to education, we can identify four different levels/stages for influence and action. These are:

### 1 Individual Action involving a change of individual attitudes to learners.

A change in the perceptions, attitudes and actions of individual educators can help to tackle the following barriers:

- the previous education of students (case study 10)
- their previous experience (case study 13)
- their lack of confidence (case study 14)
- the use of irrelevant content in teaching/learning contexts (case study 16)
- the use of language in education (case study 9)

**Recommendation:**
Special Local Education Authority Training Grants (LEATGS) staff development funding should be earmarked to influence the attitudes of FE and AE staff in tackling the above barriers to access.

### 2 Institutional Action involving institutional re-orientation without extra resources.

Changes in individual attitudes can only go so far. What may often be necessary for further progress is a re-orientation and re-organisation on the part of an institution. This may contribute to overcoming the following barriers:

- bureaucracy (case study 5)
- availability of information (case study 7)
- language in publicity (case study 8)
- inappropriate course and progression structures (case study 15)
- the timing of provision (case study 6)

**Recommendation:**
Every FE and AE institution should review their internal organisation with a view to tackling the above barriers.

### 3 Institutional Action requiring extra resources.

Some barriers can only be overcome with the help of extra resources. These include:

- the cost of provision to low income groups (case study 1)
- the need for childcare (case study 3)
- physical disability (case study 4)
- the location of provision (case study 11)

**Recommendation:**
In order to develop access for significantly under-represented groups, educational institutions should allocate further resources to childcare, disabled access, low cost and localised forms of educational provision.

### 4 Wider Policy and Curricular Action involving fundamental changes in institutional attitudes, policy and resourcing.

All the above barriers can be tackled to some degree at the levels outlined. However any real development of access opportunities needs to involve wider policy and curricular action. Educational decision-makers have to look to the meaning of education and the image of educational institutions if they are to make an educational approach relevant and meaningful to a large number of non-participating groups. Only the adoption and implementation of equal opportunities strategies, the recognition and validation of student experience and knowledge and the willingness to hand over some control of resources can attempt to tackle central access barriers like:

- value dominance (case study 2)
- ownership of resources (case study 12)

**Recommendation:**
To develop wider access opportunities now and in the longer-term, Local Education Authorities and FE and AE institutions should promote equal opportunities policies and action more rigorously (both in staff development terms and in relation to the general public). They should make every effort (and take advantage of new legislation) to make scarce educational resources more accessible and available to a wider public than at present.

# What is REPLAN?

REPLAN is the Department of Education and Science programme to improve the educational opportunities available to unemployed adults.
REPLAN is concerned with change brought about by identifying and locating examples of provision and practice that can substantially alter the life chances of unemployed people.
REPLAN assists local authorities and institutions, voluntary organisations and employers to revise existing educational provision, programmes and approaches in line with changed community demand and in the light of new developments and good practice.
There is a team of REPLAN Field Officers, based in 8 regions and managed by NIACE, who give advice and support to providers, encourage co-operation and promote good practice and pass on information which will be useful to people who want to be involved with work with unemployed and unwaged adults.

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This publication was written by adult education practitioners in the Southampton area, and produced for the REPLAN Programme by the South/South West Regional Office.
REPLAN resources are produced at national, regional or local level and aim to inform and encourage debate among those concerned with developing educational opportunities for unwaged adults.

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